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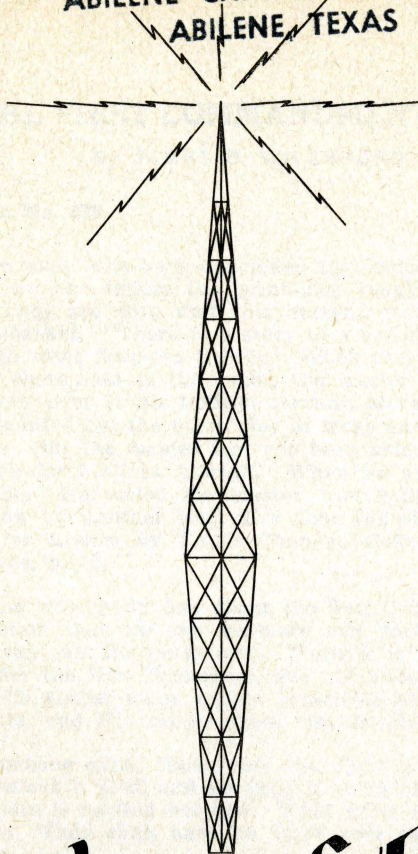
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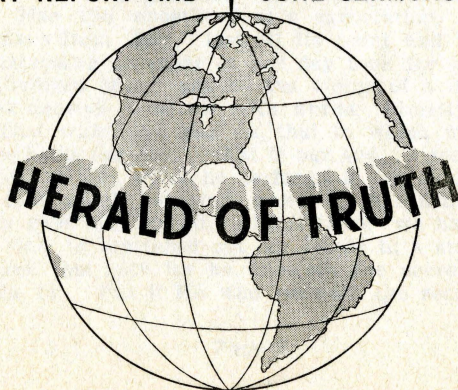
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SALUTE YOU

MAY REPORT AND JUNE SERMONS — 1956



THE FIRST COMMANDMENT--No. 2

By JAMES D. WILLEFORD

Radio Sermon No. 228

June 3, 1956

There are some who have concluded that since we are now living under grace we can ignore the principles taught in the Ten Commandments. They are sure that this ancient code is fit for nothing but the wastebasket. "There is a story of a certain master and slave who years ago went deep-sea fishing. When they were making their way back to shore late in the night, the master became sleepy and turned the helm over to his faithful servant, Mose. Before doing this, however, he pointed out the north star to Mose and urged him to keep his eye on it. But the master had not been asleep very long before Mose snatched forty winks himself. When he awakened he was in utter confusion. He called his master frantically. "Wake up!" he said, "and show me another star. I've done run clean past that one!" (Ten Rules for Living, by Clovis Chappel, Cokesbury Press, Nashville, Tennessee, p. 12).

This is the way many feel about the Ten Commandments. But it is our conviction that we can no more run past this ancient code than we can run past the north star. While it is true that Christians are living under the New Testament, and not under the Old, our Lord included in His gospel many of the principles contained in the Ten Commandments, and His people must respect these principles.

"But," someone asks, "how does the First Commandment apply to us? We believe in God, and we know that an idol is nothing in the world, that there is no God but one. What need, then, to proclaim in our ears today, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before Me'?"

But is this statement really true? We read that as Paul passed through the streets of Athens, "his spirit was provoked within him as he beheld the city full of idols." If he could pass through the streets of our cities today, would he find no idol-worship to stir his spirit within him? Most of us, perhaps, have never seen an idol in our life, unless it was in a museum. Are there, therefore, no idolaters among us? Has the apostle John's exhortation, "Little children, guard yourselves from idols," lost all its point and meaning for us? When an outstanding preacher of our day took for his subject, "The Idolatry of Civilized Men," was he the victim of a strange delusion? Do not let us deceive ourselves with words. Idolatry is an affair of the heart. That which we lean on, that to which we give our best, that which enchains our heart—that is our god. A man's true worship may not always be that which he performs in the public service of the church, but that which he offers down in that little private chapel where nobody goes but himself. And if there "we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god; Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart" (Psalms 44:20, 21). But if He who knoweth the secrets of the heart

search us out, what will He find? Will He say to us, "Their heart is far from Me," because we have chosen some other god before Him?

The first commandment applies to us because we are ever in peril of losing God in self-assertion. This is the peril of letting one's self occupy the throne. All rights to rule are in God's hands, but every man must concede to Him the right over his own life. Our Lord put it this way: "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46).

The theory of self-assertion has become a philosophy of life with some of our citizens. Instead of asserting self, and putting self on the throne, let us say with the prophet Jeremiah, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23).

The First Commandment applies to us because we are in danger of losing God in things. This is what Jesus had in mind when He said, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." Mammon was the Syrian god of riches. He is the god of money. It is amazing to what lengths some men will go to get and to keep money. It grips them so that they no longer have control over themselves. Ruskin illustrated the hold that money gets upon men by his story of a wreck in California Bay. A miner had started for his home, possessor of large wealth. He had turned it all into gold, and had it in his belt riveted about him so that it might not be taken from him. When the wreck occurred he could not release himself from the belt of gold, and was carried by its weight to his death. "Now," said Ruskin, "did he have the gold or did the gold have him?" It is always a fine thing when a man honestly makes a million dollars, because there is hope that he may use it wisely; but when the tables are turned, and the million dollars—or the hundred dollars—has the man, that is the saddest of tragedies.

Money will never use a man well. It will drive him to his death. It will never give him joy while it is controlling him. If he has it, and uses it, counting it his servant, and able to recognize God as his King before him, then it may be a blessing to him.

Money is mighty but it is not almighty. There are some things that cannot be bought. No man can violate the law of God in gaining his money, and win for himself the favor of God by the use of his money afterwards. It is possible to this day for a man to gain the whole world and lose himself.

The first commandment was given to Israel, and stated positively it would read, "If thou wilt let all other gods go, then thou shalt have me." These ancient Jews could have the true God only as they were willing to give up the gods of the surrounding nations.

We of today do not believe in those idol gods of wood and stone which the heathen worshiped, but in spite of that fact, we still have a number of gods. We no longer bow at the shrine of Venus, but that for which Venus stood still lays its enslaving and defiling hand on millions. We would never dream of worshiping Bacchus, the

old god of drink and revelry, as a person. But perhaps he has never been shown greater respect, nor had more willing worshipers than in wet America today.

In 1938 the Chamber of Commerce in the city of Dayton, Ohio, made an investigation as to how the people of that city were spending their money. They found that the citizens of Dayton were spending \$113,000 more each week for liquor than for groceries. That same year—1938—the *Central Christian Advocate* commented on the drinking habit of the American people. The author of the article said, "Since 1933 those on relief, those who are being supported by the money of the taxpayers, have spent three billions of dollars for liquor." Yes, our old gods are still with us, and we still worship them with the same fervor as did those of the long ago. (See *Ten Rules of Living*, by Clovis Chappel, p. 22, 23).

The ancient Canaanites worshiped Baal, the god of lust and sensuality, but we of today would not think of worshiping him as a person. However, this demon-god still has many followers. It has been said repeatedly that 75,000 fallen women walk the streets of New York, or London, or Paris every night. And what of the lecherous, lascivious, lewd men? They greatly outnumber the harlots. Those who are guilty of these sins are bowing to the god of lust and sensualism.

Business has become the god of some in our day. They say, "My business supports me and my family." And so they bow to the business god. But the Lord says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). An Old Testament prophet speaks of the man who worships the god of business. He says, "He taketh up all of them with the angle, he catcheth them in his net, and gathereth them in his drag: therefore he rejoiceth and is glad. Therefore he sacrificeth unto his net, and burneth incense unto his drag; because by them his portion is fat, and his food plenteous" (Habakkuk 1:15, 16, American Standard Version). Yes, by some God is ruled out, business is everything.

"Thou shalt have no other gods before Me," and surely as men forget that today, so surely shall the warnings of the prophets of old fulfill themselves in our ears. Every word they speak concerning the folly and futility of the idolatry of the past has an application, not less pointed, to the idolatry of the present. Isaiah said, "One shall cry unto (his god), yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble" (Isaiah 46:7). Is it not so today? What can our gods do for us when we are brought low, or in the dark and sore amasement of death? As the prophet said, "In that day a man shall cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for him to worship, to the moles and to the bats" (Isaiah 2:20). Hhe will realize how useless they are.

The First Commandment is applicable to us because we are in danger of losing God in popular estimates, in putting the opinion either of the public or of a small circle of men before our thought of God, until one is worshiping not God in heaven but the opinions of one's

fellows on the earth. Many have lost God in the crowd. They practice pleasures or customs which they do not find in God's will. They do these things because the Lord has been crowded off the throne of their lives. They people whom they know do them, and they cannot bear to be peculiar. They cannot bear to oppose a popular movement, even though they feel it is not a divine movement. The whole question of amusement and of conduct would be settled for us if everyone honestly sought to learn God's will. If we honestly sought His will continually, we might at first do things in our eagerness which were wrong, but we would soon be led out of that ignorance into a wiser way.

There is but one God and He has given us the Bible as our guide. There is such a thing as truth independent of man and what man thinks. In speaking to His Father, Christ said, "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17). Something may be very popular and fashionable at the moment and not be truth at all. Nothing is more dangerous than the idea that a thing is right because it is practiced by most of the people or because the government approves it. There is nothing to the old statement: "There's nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so." If fashion makes a practice right, one fashion would be as good as another and so anything practiced by people would be all right. There would be no need for God's guiding hand in our lives.

We need the First Commandment because there is danger that we may lose God in our hearts and lives. Some of us confess His majesty and greatness as the Creator of the heavens and the earth, but the confession is a mere formality, and not the expression of a real and living faith. When we are professing to worship Him our hearts are not hushed with reverence, and there is no fire or rapture in our praise. When we sin grossly we are stung with self-reproach and humiliated by the loss of self-respect, but we do not fear His anger. The hope of winning His approval is not an active and energetic motive to doing right. Are not many of us conscious that if we lost God from our hearts altogether no element of joy or terror would be lost to our life? Would not the whole current of thought and passion run in its old channels? Would not our sorrows be the same, our hopes and our fears? Would not the sunlight and the darkness be the same as before? The appalling truth is, that many American citizens have all but sunk into atheism, for to live as though there were no God is atheism.

All of these perils of losing God become the sadder when we realize how much we lose in our loss of Him. How can we have another god when we have Him? There is no one in whom we can so fulfill ourselves as in Him. There is no one who will so develop in us all that is worth developing, and so burn out from us all that should be taken away from us. According to tradition, when the knights came to King Arthur there passed over their faces a momentary likeness of their king. As they remained with him they took on the very expression of his face, and this became a fixed characteristic. When a man has once found the will of God, and has set out to ful-

fill it, subordinating his own pleasures, subordinating all opinions to it, it is then that he has found life meaning most, and its ideals seeming most practical and real.

Queen Elizabeth broke the mirror on seeing her gray hairs and furrowed face. Our knowledge of God in Jesus Christ reveals to us the defects and weaknesses of our lives, and yet reveals to us, also the possibilities of life, so that we never know until we see Him what we are or what we can become. We are sacrificing immeasurably when we have any other god before Him.

There is no one for whom we can do as much as we can for our Lord. There is no one whose projects are as large as His. There is no one whose plan for the work of the world is so splendid and inspiring as His. There opens before us, when we acknowledge His right over us, the splendid service of the conquest of the whole world, the bringing of the whole earth to submission to Him, the redeeming of the whole world from the thralldom of sin and the bondage of selfishness, until He becomes King of Kings and Lord of Lords, until His reign extends over the whole world, which has known many other lords, but never has known one who could be Father and Redeemer and Lover as can He. Turning aside and serving any other God, putting any other interest foremost in life, is wasting life, is throwing away that which might be used for the greatest purposes of which mankind can conceive.

But if we are to have Him we must give Him our entire devotion. He does not divide His rights. Jesus worded it for us in saying, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." No matter whether Mammon would agree to it or not, God would not. "The Lord said, 'He that is not with me is against me,' and 'No man can serve two masters' (Matthew 12:30; 6:24).

In having, in trusting the one God, we find Him engrossing all the capacity for the divine within us. We are forced to give Him either our all, or nothing. We cannot serve Him with a fraction of ourselves; it requires as much as in us is to obey Him: and when He answers our obedience with His comradeship, He fills our every need and more. To have Him we must give Him our adoration, our confidence, our loyalty and not a part but the whole of our soul's devotion. He "demands our soul, our life, our all."

My friend, what is your god? Will you think seriously and answer that question as if under solemn oath? What is your God? Ask yourself the question: What is my God? Upon what is my heart set? Who has my love? Whom am I serving? Remember the words, "I am Jehovah, thy God . . . Thou shalt have no other gods before me." If God is in the background, call upon Him to "Break down every idol, cast out every foe." Let Him be your God! Let Him who was, and who is, and who will be occupy the throne of your heart and dominate your life*

He is standing even now at the door of your heart. He is knocking

as he woos you with this tender appeal: "If any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3:20). This means that if you are willing to give up your lesser gods, you can have the real God. If you will receive Him, He will gladly receive you. If you will obey Him, He will bless you. Trust Him for everything; obey Him implicitly; glorify Him alone. Let Him reign in the firmament of your spiritual and religious life without a partner or a rival.

God demonstrated the "exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is His body, the fulness of Him who filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:19-23). On the day of Pentecost three thousand Jews invited the Lord into their hearts, and enthroned Him as their King. When the apostle Peter informed them of heaven's will, the Bible says, "they that gladly received His word were baptized . . . And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:42, 47). They bowed before the Lord's throne, and He bestowed upon them spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Will you follow in the steps of these believers who humbled themselves under the mighty hand of God, and were exalted in due time?

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT--No. 1

By JAMES D. WILLEFORD

Radio Sermon No. 229

June 10, 1956

The Second Commandment as given in the Old Testament, reads, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments" (Exodus 20:4-6).

The First Commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me," forbids polytheism—the worship of many gods. The Second Commandment forbids idolatry—the worship of images. The First Commandment tells us whom we are to worship, the Second tells how we are to worship Him. The First Commandment forbids putting anything in the place of God; the Second forbids putting anything between us and Him.

All men are the offspring of God, for He made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, that they should seek God (Acts 17:26-29). Because all men have come from one and the same God, the idea of God is coextensive with the human race. The instinct of religion is natural and therefore universal. Every man from an inward natural prompting worships some object or being. Wherever travelers have penetrated—whether into the polar regions, the heart of the Dark Continent or the most isolated isles of the seas—they have never found a race so degraded that it did not worship something. On the other hand, there has never been a race so civilized that it did not have its divinity or divinities.

True, there are in our own favored times a few who profess themselves to be atheists. Nevertheless, even these gentlemen have some kind of a god of their own; if it is not the personal God described in the Scriptures, it is the impersonal Absolute of Law, of Force, or of Nature. Even Voltaire prayed in an Alpine thunder-storm, and Herbert Spencer speaks with awe and reverence of the Unknowable Force.

Man, therefore, needs no command to worship. He worships as instinctively as he breathes. But he needs his instinct of worship divinely regulated, so that he may worship the true God in the right way. Otherwise, he may worship Him unworthily.

The Second Commandment simply forbids the carving of images and painting of pictures with the intention of making them objects of religious reverence. The Second Commandment condemns a very different sin from that which is condemned in the First. The First Commandment condemns the worshiping of false gods; the Second condemns the making of any image or symbol even of the true God. Not only the worship of an image is forbidden, but the bowing down before it is prohibited by the Second Commandment. The prohibition of image-worship is made very broad so that no one can plead ignorance of the divine intention. In the last book of the Bible, the apostle John tells us that he fell down before the feet of the angel that showed him the Holy City, but the angel refused his homage and said, "See thou do it not . . . worship God" (Revelation 22:8, 9). Only God is a being great enough, glorious enough and good enough to be worshiped by any man. If the Lord would not permit John to bow before a live angel, do you suppose He would approve our bowing before the image or statue of one?

At first reading, the Second Commandment simply forbids our worshiping an image of God. And that seems easy to obey. We say idolatry is coarse and out of date. But idolatry is not always so coarse as that. There are thoughtful men even among idolaters, and they have no idea that their image is God. It only represents Him, as your photograph represents you to those who love you. They speak of it as though it were yourself, may even speak to it, call it by endearing names, and all that, but they do not mistake it for yourself.

It scarcely needs to be said that no one above the very lowest stages of barbarism ever worships an image itself, but only the Divine

Being through such a representation of Him. When Aaron made the golden calf for the children of Israel, it did not stand before them in the place of God; it was meant merely as a symbol of the unseen Jehovah. We are distinctly told that when the image was made, Aaron "made proclamation and said, To-morrow shall be a feast to the Lord." Why then was God angry with the children of Israel, and why did He visit them with such sore punishment? Because they had worshiped the true God under a false and forbidden form; they had broken the Second Commandment.

If you ask a Brahman today what his belief is, he will tell you that he does not worship the image before which he bows, but only the divine presence that hallows it. In fact, an educated Hindu, replying to the accusation that his countrymen worship the idol itself, says, "If this is what is meant by idolatry, we disclaim idolatry, we abhor idolatry, and we deplore the ignorance or uncharitableness of those who charge us with this grovelling system of worship" (*The Ten Laws*, by Edward Beecher Mason, pp. 45, 46).

Nearly all idolaters intend to worship God through the image, not it. Indeed "in the history of Greece there was a distinct ceremony whereby a god was inducted into the image which he was to occupy" (*The Mosaic Law in Modern Life* by Cleland Boyd McAfee, Fleming H. Revell Co., p. 57). Until he took up his abode there, the image was not sacred, it was wood or stone; after the ceremony, it became sacred.

It is in such ways that even the grossest idolatry has been defended from the beginning. And yet the Second Commandment stands forbidding us to worship God through an image. We are to have no images that represent God to us. We are to make no effort to bring Him into shape or form before us.

The graven images which are forbidden in the Second Commandment are not spoken of as being gods, but as being like gods. The command forbids the making of any kind of image for religious veneration. The Lord emphatically said, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them."

Why should anyone desire an image to use in connection with his worship of God? Man is finite and it is difficult for him to conceive of the Infinite One under finite conditions, or limitations, localizing Him in time and in space. This is the origin of idolatry, or the worship of images. Man, instinctively worshipping God, yet conceiving of Him under limitations of space and time and form, began to make representations of God, now in this form and now in that, in order to aid him in worship. But nothing was easier than to glide from these representations of God to the worship of the representations themselves; thus changing the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts and creeping things (Romans 1:23).

Have you ever wondered why God forbade the use of images or

statues in His worship? He forbade their use for the reason best stated by Christ Himself, when He said, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). That is to say: We must worship God according to His nature; His Nature is spiritual, and we must worship Him spiritually—spirit-wise, not image-wise; for only what is spiritual in us can worship what is spiritual above us.

The command against the use of images was made to rest on the pure spirituality of God. When Moses re-read the law to Israel he emphasized this command by charging the people to, "Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female" (Deuteronomy 4:15, 16).

Symbolism tends to degrade our conception of God. In the mind of every worshiper a two-fold tendency is at work—to lift the symbol to the place of God, or to bring God down to the level of the symbol. What Paul saw at Athens, Greece, happens always when men are given over to idolatry, they think that "the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device" (Acts 17:29). No idol, be it of priceless material worth, or only some rudely carved block of wood or stone, can be a true representation of God. To bow down before it is to cut the wings of the spirit; it is to fetter and cramp our thoughts of God, and to leave us earthbound and material.

God is pure Spirit; He has not body or parts as we have, nor as images must have, and any effort to bring His glory and perfection into physical form is essentially and necessarily degrading. The heaven of heavens cannot contain Him. He is most holy and august and immeasurably above the earth in which we dwell. How can it be other than a degradation of Him when we make our little images of Him, or our little pictures of Him? That was Paul's argument on Mars' Hill—We are made by Him and we are better than silver and gold, how then can we image Him as silver or gold or anything else without humiliating Him? Any image that man can make is even less than man, for no man can make anything equal to himself, because he is God-made. Man is a being of such dignity and worth that it is a shame and dishonor for him to bow himself down before gods of silver and gold, the work of his own hands.

The force of the Second Commandment is directed against the common and deeply rooted tendency in man to put in some visible shape his idea or conception of the invisible, everliving and Eternal God. Graven images, intended to be in the likeness or similitude of God, cannot fail to give in the end false notions and ideas of the divine character and being. If God is unspeakable, unrepresentable and indescribable, then any effort to describe or represent Him can only misrepresent and caricature. Images are but caricatures of God.

The making of images for religious veneration is against great and

eternal principles. The almighty Maker of heaven and earth cannot be fashioned by any creature. It is folly to attempt to make an image of Him who is invisible and has never been seen by human eyes. We begin with thinking that the images are like God, and end with thinking that God is like the images. We cannot expand the finite to meet the infinite, and so we contract the infinite to meet the finite. It is impossible to preserve a sense of God's pure spirituality when He is always adored as locally present to the senses in the form of a piece of matter.

However great or fine an image may be, it presents only one phase of the character of God. Whether it be the image of Ceylon, representing His vengeance, or the immense figure of the Buddha in Japan to represent His majesty, or the image of solid gold with silver tracings in India to represent His riches, or even the crucifix of the Christian worshiper to represent His sacrificial love, it is all partial. In none of the images alone, nor in all of them combined do you see His whole being. They are all narrow and partial, and they all leave us with one-sided views of Him. Even we petty men are offended at such representations of ourselves as leave unnoted the best parts of our work and service. It is as though we were to honor George Washington, not as our first president, but as the author of a nursery rhyme and nothing else.

A further reason why God forbade the making of an image is the danger that the image will retake His place, and we will worship it in spite of our theory that it is not God. Have we not been informed already of a statue in Sicily that weeps blood?

How caustic is the Scriptural irony against the making of graven images. For example, the prophet Isaiah takes us into the blacksmith's shop, and shows us the smith working among the coals, and fashioning a metal idol, and becoming exhausted with his toil, but the idol does not return the smith's devotion. Next, the prophet takes us into the carpenter's shop, and shows us the carpenter stretching out a line for a wooden idol, marking it out with a pencil, shaping it with carving tools, and making it like the figure of a man, that he may enshrine it in his house. Lastly, the prophet takes us into the kitchen, and shows us the idol-maker carving half of a pine log into an image, and burning the other half, in order to bake his bread and roast his meat, thus putting his god on an equality with his food. The sarcasm is exquisite, and it should be a warning to us all.

There is a vast difference between representing God in some material form and in the mental conceptions which we are able to form of Him. It is not that the idol is an unworthy representative of God, while the conception in the mind is a worthy one. No, both are faulty. My thoughts of the Eternal are a long way from being worthy or adequate. What then? Is it not as bad to frame a poor, low, false notion of Divinity in our mind as to make a picture or an image of Him? No, it is not: for one reason. The mental notion is capable of being improved. It tends, in fact, to elevate itself with the general elevation of mankind; whereas the material idol tends only to a further

degradation. The real difficulty with a graven image is its rigidity; it is fixed, and therefore a limited and confining representation of Him who is limitless. A growing soul demands a growing thought of God, and it is they who endure as seeing Him who is invisible, without insisting on seeing some representation of Him with their eyes, who succeed in making His character most manifest in what they themselves are, and in what they make their homes, their work, their country, to be.

As we grow in grace and in the knowledge of God's word, our mental image of God should improve. How perilous it is to carry in one's mind at twenty the same image of God that stood there at ten! How pathetic to see a man of forty looking with the eyes of his heart at a Divine Face that has no more in it for him than he saw there when he was one and twenty.

The Jew at the foot of Mount Sinai needed the Second Commandment. He had just emerged from idolatrous Egypt—a land which was given over to image-worship. Such was the influence of the law that it kept pure a worship which would have passed into the same immoral vices as the paganism about it. It checked the abuse that lay in human nature. Open the writings of the prophets, the noblest poetry in any literature, and note with what energy they hurl their rebukes against kings and priests who "made Israel to sin." What bolts of sarcasm, what bursts of wrath that sound like the thunders still breaking afar off over the peaks of Horeb! History tells us the result. The Jews became formalists, but never a nation of idolaters. In the first century, when Pompey forced his way into the Jewish temple, surveyed every part and penetrated into the Holy of Holies, he found that sacred enclosure empty. He saw there no statue or image or visible form of any divine being to whom the place was consecrated. The Holy of Holies could have no image, but its veil shrouded the lonely place, and even the winged cherubim overshadowing the Mercy Seat were ideal forms, copied from no real creature, which only added to the mystery, brooding in silence over the worshipers. We can well imagine the wonder of the Roman general when he tore aside with his rude hand the veil of the temple, and saw the mystery of the Most Holy Place, with no image of a god. There is a golden sentence of the Talmud which reads, "The Holy of Holies was left empty, to teach thee, O Israel, that no place containeth the Eternal One; but thine heart is His sanctuary" (*The Social Law of God*, by E. A. Washburn, p. 54).

God wished to be thought of by the Jews as He had revealed Himself in His words and acts. They were not to make a god for themselves, but to worship Him who had made Himself known as the Creator of the Heavens and of the Earth. His Tent standing among their tents in the wilderness, His Palace standing among their palaces in Jerusalem, gave them a vivid impression that His home was among them, and that He was a God nigh at hand, and not afar off, but He did not permit His eternal majesty to be represented by any visible form, such as a statue or an image.

He wanted His people to enthrone Him in their hearts, and to

blend His spiritual image into their lives. He did not want His features outlined in cold marble and granite, but in the souls of men. He decreed that worship designed for Him would not please Him if it came through an image. It had to come directly from the worshiper to the throne of mercy.

God still wants the sincere love of His people, and Christ says, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15)). The Lord also said, "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me" (John 14:21). If we love the Christ we shall let nothing come between us and our God, and every obstacle shall be pushed aside that we may do His will. We shall find joy in our faith, strength in our repentance, and newness of life in scriptural baptism for the remission of our sins.

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT—No. 2

By JAMES D. WILLEFORD

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June 17, 1956

The Jew was not the only one who needed the Second Commandment. Modern Christendom needs it, too. There are many forms in which the principle of this Commandment can be violated. Let us take the simplest and most obvious illustration. It cannot be denied that the image of our Lord Jesus Christ in His dying agony, with His hands and feet nailed to the cross, the crown of thorns on His brow, and His face lined with suffering, may produce a very powerful impression on the imagination and the heart. There are some who find in the strength of that impression a sufficient justification for the devotional use of the crucifix. They say that no Christian imagines that the crucifix is Christ. The visible form does but call up the emotions which should be created by the sorrows and anguish in which the divine love was revealed, and by which the sin of the world was atoned for. It makes the great sacrifice for human salvation more intensely real and vivid.

But precisely the same argument might have been alleged in defense of the golden calf by which Aaron satisfied the craving of the Jews for a visible representation of Jehovah. No one supposed that it was the calf itself which had smitten the Egyptians with plagues and divided the Red Sea. It was but a symbol of the invisible God. The people exulted when they saw it; they feasted; they sang; they danced; their shout was like the shout of battle. However, their crime made the wrath of God "wax hot" against them, and in His anger He threatened to consume them.

But there are objections of another kind to this prostration of the soul before the image of the dying Christ. It makes our worship and our prayer unreal. We are adoring a Christ who does not exist. He is

not on the cross now, but on the throne. His agonies are past forever. He has risen from the dead. He is at the right hand of God. If we pray to a dying Christ, symbolized by any material object, we are praying not to Christ Himself, but to a mere remembrance of Him. Would not this give us a dying Christ instead of a living Christ, a Christ separated from us by many centuries instead of a Christ nigh at hand?

Some of us protest against the crucifix but for the cross we have toleration. We see golden crosses on our hymn books; crimson crosses on our Bibles; and little wooden crosses on our mantel-pieces. It is true that no Christian heart, in which the love of Christ is strong; can ever look on the symbol of His Passion without emotion. A faded ribbon, a withered flower, an old book of poems, may sometimes move us to tears by recalling the memory of those whom we loved and lost, and the pathetic memories which gather round the death of Christ must invest the very form of His cross with infinite sacredness. But if once we permit the deeper religious emotions to become attached, however slightly, to a material symbol, there is the beginning of that very superstition which the Second Commandment forbids.

Your cross is common wood—part of the same block may have been made into a frame for the portrait of an opera dancer. Or it is common metal, and the same hands which wrought the trinket into its sacred form, may have made of the same gold the head of a fox. If you feel that your cross is sacred, you are beginning to bow down before it and to worship it; for worship is reverence for what is sacred and divine.

On the other hand, if your cross is not sacred to you, if it is a trinket and nothing more, your heart must be very cold. To regard as a mere ornament the visible memorial of the sufferings which are the supreme manifestation of God's love, the great hope of our race, the ground of our deliverance from the pains of eternal death, appears to us either impossible to a Christian heart or a sign of strange insensibility to what ought to stir all the deepest and strongest passions of our nature.

But still, it may be asked: If a picture, a crucifix, or a cross touches my heart, why may I not use it? If I feel that Christ is nearer to me when I see on the canvas the infinite sadness, the perfect purity, the yearning love which some devout painter has expressed in His countenance, and when I see in ivory the image of the agonies which He endured for my salvation, why should I reject their aid?

We have already pointed out that precisely the same argument might have been used in defense of the golden calf which Aaron made to be a symbol of Jehovah. The sight of the calf made Jehovah's presence more vividly real to the people who shouted and danced before it. But the use of the people made of the calf as a symbol of God was a violation of the Second Commandment, and the Lord condemned them for it. Our hearts should be moved by what God has revealed to us of Himself—not by any inventions of our own. We have no more right to invent a divine appeal to religious emotion

than we have to invent a new revelation as a divine appeal to the understanding.

We should never grow weary of protesting against every tendency to attach religious sanctity to any material thing. Our house of worship—consecrated though it may be to many of us by the holiest and most pathetic associations—is not the dwelling place of God. Its walls have no sacredness which does not belong to the walls of our warehouse, our shop, our courts in which magistrates administer justice, our galleries in which paintings are exhibited or our halls in which we meet to discuss politics or to listen to Handel, Mendelssohn and Mozart. The Lord says He “dwelleth not in temples made with hands” (Acts 17:24). Do you say that it assists your devotion to feel that the church building is in a special sense the dwelling-place of God? Again we say, that the same kind of argument would have justified the Jews when they broke the Second Commandment by making the golden calf. Religious devotion not founded on truth must itself be false. If God is not in a building in any special sense, that cannot be true devotion which comes from believing that He is. The special presence of Christ is promised to consecrated persons, not to consecrated places. It is partly because many of our citizens have lost their faith in the divine origin and mission of the church itself that they have invented a supernatural sanctity for the building in which the church assembles.

But the Second Commandment goes deeper still. It touches the whole matter of our relation to God. It forbids our having anything between ourselves and Him. We are to come to Him directly, and not through a human intermediary. We need nothing to make Him real to us, if we seek His face. Anything that stands for God to us violates the command. Some of us are in danger of putting the minister or the priest in the place of God. We feel that he has some peculiar relation to God and that we can get to God better through him. A woman who is intelligent in most things told me recently that in her thought the minister represents God among men. For my own part, as a minister of the gospel I disclaim any such dignity that would give me special access to God save as belongs to all Christians. The humblest member of the body of Christ may come to Him with just as much hope of acceptance. Thank God it is as easy to come to Christ now as it was in the days when Nicodemus came by night and when the woman of Samaria talked with Him by the well-side. The way of approach is as direct, as immediate as ever it was: “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out,” and let no man by whatsoever name he calls himself be an intruder. And what can he do for us? Christ is our great High Priest, and the apostle Peter says that all Christians are “a royal priesthood,” and that each of us can “offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5, 9). Since every Christian is a priest, he can go directly to his High Priest without any human intermediary. The apostle Paul says that Christ is “able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25). The way to our Lord is direct—no image, no man, no symbol—nothing but per-

sonal obedience stands between any man and his God. Therefore let us come, and bid all men “come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

There is a growing tendency in the churches to observe religious times and seasons. Services are including more of form than they once had. We hear more about Good Friday, and Easter, and Christmas, and Holy Week. There is danger in all this. There is danger of a formalism that will take the heart out of the religion we profess. The tendency of all special times and seasons is to hold our minds to them as though they comprised the only time of our duty. Some use Lent as a general spiritual house-cleaning time, but every man should go to God for a daily cleansing. There are people who are so impressed with the value of Lent as a season that they serve Satan with great vigor for three hundred and twenty-five days of the year and then try to crowd their regard for God into the forty that are left. In writing to the Galatians, the apostle Paul said, “Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain” (Galatians 4:10, 11). This should settle once for all the question of observing special religious seasons which our Lord did not authorize.

The modern movement to ritualism in religion is a distinctly retrograde movement. In its inmost spirit it belongs to the dead past rather than to the living present. Let us explain what we mean. When we study the Old Testament, we are met at every turn by rite, symbol and ordinance. These things were bound up with the very life of Judaism. But now, if we turn to the New Testament, what do we find? That of all the ritual observances which were so important under the law, not one remains in force. The Lord Jesus ordained two simple rites: Baptism and the Lord's Supper—one an act of obedience, and the other to commemorate His suffering and His death upon the cross.

Let us notice how God has discarded ritualism. First, we have Judaism with its complex ritualism; then Christianity, discarding for the most part everything of the kind, though still ordaining certain simple rites, and last of all, John's vision of the perfected future from which all trace of the symbolical has passed forever away. Says the apostle John, in his vision of the heavenly Jerusalem, “I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it” (Revelation 21:22).

Then, if these things are so, where is the place for modern ritualism? Do we not see that the whole movement is a return to the past? It is putting back the hands of the clock some three thousand years. The very fact that God once used ritualism on a large scale and then deliberately put it aside is the strongest of all reasons why we should not now go back to it. As Paul said to the Galatians, “But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage” (Galatians 4:9). And a “turning back” the movement certainly is. It is the man that was healed going back to the

crutches with which he used to hobble along in the days of his lameness; it is the grown-up man who has learned to read, going back to the ABC picture-book of his childhood; it is for us who have with open face beheld Christ to choose rather to dwell among the types and emblems that do but dimly shadow Him forth. Instead of the pure, spiritual religion of Christ ritualism is a religion of the senses, a sort of baptized paganism.

Two things the Second Commandment means for our present day: First, let nothing come between your soul and God. Go to Him directly, and let nothing intercept your soul on its way to God. And, second, keep your worship of God spiritual. Do not try to find God through an image, but let your soul meet Him as soul meets soul.

After the Lord forbade Israel to bow down before a graven image, He said, "for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God." God is jealous for His own glory and for our good. His jealousy is not the mean jealousy of men who feel that someone else is receiving attention which they ought to receive. It is not the jealousy of selfishness. It is the jealousy of a high minded regard for interests too sacred to be neglected. God loves us so much that, for His sake and for our honor, He does not want us to bow to images. We know that God could not be a jealous God if He were not a loving God; His jealousy is a measure of His love. Never could He speak thus to us if He were indifferent to us, if it were a matter of no concern to Him whether we served Him or not. And when we read that He is jealous, instead of the face of an angry Deity, breathing forth threatenings and wrath, which is all that some men see, there meets us a Face all aglow with love. And when we put down our ears to listen, instead of the gnashing fury of jealous hate, which is all that some men hear, a Voice of love, tender, beseeching, calls to us: "Child of man, I have redeemed thee, thou art Mine; yield thyself to Me."

One of the fairest-looking falsehoods by which men excuse themselves for living a life in which God has no place is the plea that the infinite God cannot care for the love and reverence of such creatures as we are. But when will men understand that our heavenly Father can never be indifferent to the affection, the obedience and the confidence of His children?

The iniquity of the fathers, which Jehovah declares He will visit upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Him, is the iniquity of violating the first two commandments—the iniquity of worshiping any god except Jehovah; and the iniquity of worshiping God through an image. The progress of idolatry is ever downward. The sins of the fathers are visited upon succeeding generations in the gradual darkening and debasing of the religious instincts and in the rapid growth of superstition.

The Second Commandment is for our good. The Lord gave it to keep His people from ever changing "the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man" (Romans 1:23). And

our obedience to this command should be prompted by the attitude, "Even so, Father! for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

But though the children of Israel were forbidden to make any graven image, their desire for a God nigh at hand and not afar off, a God who could be seen and heard and handled, was fulfilled in Christ. The apostle John says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:1, 14). Christ said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). And the apostle Paul says that Christ is "the brightness of His (God's) glory, and the express image of His person" (Hebrews 1:3). He who said, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image," sent forth His Son, "the express image of His person," that in Him all men may behold "the image of the invisible God."

The Second Commandment is a divine protest against man-made gods; our thought of God must be God-given. Would a man know God? Let him see the Son of God. We are turned away from images made by men that we may see the divine image God gave of Himself. We may not, we must not worship images; but there is one image we may and should worship; it is Jesus Christ who is the image of God. And yet it is not the flesh of our Lord, but His character which mirrors the Father. The flesh even of Jesus profiteth nothing as a representation of the Divine Glory. We possess unforgettable word pictures of what Christ did and suffered, but not a syllable to recall what He was to men's eyes. We do not know whether He was tall or short, dark or fair. Not a hint is given us of the shape of a single feature of His face nor of the color of His eyes. How accurate and full is the portrait of His spirit, His mind and heart! But how completely lost in oblivion is His outward form.

Christ is not a man-made image of God, but in His life and teaching we see an image of the Father. When God made man He said, "Let Us make man in Our image" (Genesis 1:26), but this divine image was marred when man sinned. Christ came to restore that divine image in all who will accept His grace, and be led by His Spirit. In writing to the Corinthians the apostle Paul said, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (II Corinthians 3:18). We are changed into the Lord's image by faith which purifies the heart; by repentance which purifies the life, and by baptism which purifies the state, and changes our relationship to God. Whereas, we were out of Christ before baptism, we put Him on in baptism, and thus take upon ourselves the image of God's dear Son.

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

By JAMES D. WILLEFORD

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When God gave the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai, He said, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain" (Exodus 20:7). The rabbis say that when this command was uttered the whole earth trembled. Although this tradition is probably untrue, it does indicate the deep reverence the Israelites had for God's name. It is said that the Jews kept the name Jehovah as a wonderful and mysterious secret among themselves, and never used it in their intercourse with the heathen. Even they used it rarely. There is a tradition that it was heard but once a year, when it was uttered by the High Priest on the great day of Atonement. In reading the scriptures it became customary never to pronounce it, but to replace it, wherever it occurred, with another divine name, which was regarded as less awful and august.

Sir Isaac Newton was accustomed never to utter the name of God without removing his hat in reverence. Another outstanding scholar always paused before he pronounced the name of God, that he might utter it with due reverence.

While it is not by such observances as these that we are to show our reverence for God, we appreciate the reverent attitude of these men. The Third Commandment requires something very different from a ceremonial homage to His name. His name means not only the word which we use, but that for which the name stands, for the whole meaning of God. His name stands for Himself. It is to Him that our reverence is due.

Who of us was not taught in childhood to revere the name of Washington? And yet we know it was not the mere name "Washington" which we are taught to respect. What we were taught to honor was that of which the word "Washington" is the mere symbol and shrine—namely, his character, his wisdom, his integrity, his patriotism, his heroism; that which Washington was, and that which Washington did. In like manner, God's name not only signifies all His various titles; it also signifies His nature, His attributes, His character, His authority, His purposes, His methods, His providences, His words, His institutions, His truths, His kingdom; in short, all that God is, all that God says, all that God does, all that God bids. Thus the name of God is significant. It is a name and something more. It is a revelation of God's identity. It sums up what God has made known of Himself to man. It was with this truth in mind that the prophet Isaiah said, "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

The Third Commandment applies especially to our speech, to the

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words of our mouths. How much of our time is spent in conversation! How important then is the command, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain!" The tongue is our glory, and we should use it to praise and honor our Maker. Our Lord said, "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matthew 12:36, 37). Talking is solemn, serious business, and men should realize that they will be brought into judgment for the careless and flippant way in which they use the name of God.

For thirty-five hundred years the Third Commandment has stood as the standard warning against profane swearing, and yet many American citizens ignore this divine prohibition. There are intelligent men and women who swear as if they had been to hell for their schooling and had had the devil himself for their schoolmaster. Young men who are heedless will take upon their lips so cheaply the name of the mighty God, who made and sustains them, that one could shudder. Even the devils have not gone so far! The Bible tells us the devils believe there is one God, and they shudder as they think of it. But some of us bandy His name about as though it were the cheapest of all cheap words.

Profanity is painfully prevalent and unspeakably perilous to our souls. It is "the superfluity of naughtiness," the sickening vomit of a wicked heart, the hot lava of iniquity overflowing the lips—cursing, blighting, defiling, debasing all that hear it.

In our country profanity is a widespread epidemic. The words of Jeremiah will apply to us, "Because of swearing the land mourneth." One can hardly walk a block in town or city without hearing some coarse jest or vile oath. For some people swearing seems as easy and natural as breathing.

But of one thing we can be sure: When a person takes God's name in vain it is evident that his heart is a reservoir of filth for Christ said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." What comes from the lips was drained from the heart. Emerson once wrote very searchingly, "Use what language you will, you can never say anything but what you are" (*The Ten Commandments* by H. S. Coffin, p. 57).

What is wrong with profanity? It is a symptom of an inner sickness. It is a stream that flows from a poisoned fountain. To be convinced of this, one need only realize what is indicated by a light and vulgar handling of other less sacred names than that of our Lord. There is, for instance, a coarse and dirty epithet that men sometimes hurl at each other that reflects upon one's mother. It is an insult that no man is willing to take. Yet not long ago a certain individual, in conversation with a minister, flippantly called himself by that filthy name. What did this indicate? It was not proof positive that his mother was a cheap and vulgar woman, but it did prove, beyond a doubt, that she had reared a cheap and vulgar son. The only re-

flection upon her, of course, was being the mother of such a son. But whoever was to blame, his coarse handling of his mother's name indicated that his moral nature was exceedingly weak and contemptible.

What would you think of a husband who would take the name of his wife in vain? Years ago, as a boy, I overheard a man who had just recently married discussing his wife with a group of other men. He spoke of her in a way that led to loud guffaws of laughter from his audience. Since then I have forgotten many things worth remembering, but this ugly bit of coarseness I have never been able to forget.

If we discredit those who speak in slight and flippant fashion of wife or mother, how much more should this be the case for those who profanely take upon their lips the holy name of God. Such a practice tends to kill that beautiful and fundamental virtue of reverence. This spells tragedy, for reverence is the very queen of the virtues. It is the doorway to every kind of knowledge. That is the reason that Jesus, when He taught us to pray, put this petition first, "Hallowed by Thy name." Reverence is the doorway into the audience chamber of the King. That door is fast shut in the face of the profane.

What is wrong with profanity? Its effect is not to hurt God, but to hurt man. It strikes backward. We have seen that God is a jealous God; but He is jealous for His creatures, and not for Himself. No man can take fire in his bosom and not be burned; no man can take God's name in vain, and not suffer loss of moral manhood. Common swearing is vulgar; it is the language of the slums. Except among the lower orders the habit is confined to callow braggarts, who have lost their manners of decent reverence for sacred things. "Those that wish to be clean, clean will they be, and those who wish to be foul, foul will they be." Foul language makes a foul spirit. Those things which proceed out of the mouth defile the man. By a sort of reflex action the poison of profanity sinks into the soul and corrupts the whole life.

We are very inconsistent when we come into the Lord's house on Sunday and praise God with our lips and then take His name in vain on Monday! What good is our praise if we nullify it with profanity? God has never approved of double talk and He never will. In the Bible the Lord rebukes double talk in these words, "Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh" (James 3:10-12). In spite of all these warnings there are so-called religious people who take God's name in vain. They sing to Him with one breath and then spit in His face with the next. Shame! Shame!

Profanity is an indication of ill-breeding. It is the hallmark of the low life. It is the language of the sot and the libertine. We do not follow Lord Chesterfield with any devotion, but Chesterfield was right in saying that a gentleman never swears. The attitude that we

should have toward a profane use of God's name is illustrated by an incident in which a preacher friend of mine was involved. Brother C. R. Nichol stopped, while traveling across the country by car, at a drug store for a soft drink. While he was being served a traveling salesman came in, and started to tell a joke which involved the use of God's name. After starting the joke the salesman stopped, looked around, and asked, "Is there a lady in the store?" Brother Nichol replied, "No, but there is a gentleman, and if you'll wait just a moment he'll be gone!" The Third Commandment forbids that wretched habit into which so many of us have fallen of jesting about holy things. And yet one hears many a jest which has for its chief point either the use of God's name, or some passage from His word, or of some great hymn which is offered to His praise.

Profanity is a sign of impoverished vocabulary. Bunyan confesses: "I knew not how to speak unless I put an oath before, and another behind, to make my words have authority" (*The Ten Commandments*, by H. S. Coffin, p. 59). And this is the thinking of many. Multitudes have decided that their conversation would be disgustingly insipid unless they salt it with vigorous, mouth-filling oaths. Therefore, they have developed a proficiency in swearing that has increased with the passing years. But in spite of its popularity, profanity is at once silly and vulgar. This does not mean that there are not otherwise highly intelligent men and women who are addicted to the habit of swearing. But it does not mean that those so addicted have no need for their intelligence when they swear. In so doing, they are using the same vocabulary that is used by low-grade thugs and morons.

Profanity is utterly useless. Not one thing has ever been gained by it. It is called "the most gratuitous of all sins." It is said that when the accusing angel flies up to heaven with a man's vile oath, he blushes as he hands it in, and that the recording angel blushes as he puts it on record. These angels realize how sinful, senseless and shameful curses are and how God hates them. Swearing is the sure sign of vulgarity, of an empty head, of the lack of refinement; it is the talk of the "broad road that leadeth to destruction." It is the language of the pit.

Profanity is a sin against God. A very common and profane act is for a man to call upon God to curse or condemn someone. This is the vilest, grossest sort of blasphemy, because God never damns anyone. God never has damned anyone and He never will. That is the work of the devil. God's work is to love and to save men. God calls upon all men everywhere to repent and be saved. To attribute to God any other motive and work is a libel upon His love and character. Profanity is a vile, loathsome, awful sin against our Father in heaven.

In this connection the words of George Washington come to mind. He said to his men at Valley Forge: "The foolish and wicked practice of profane swearing is a vice so low and mean, that every person of sense and character detests and despises it. The General hopes that the officers, by example as well as influence, will endeavor to check profane swearing, and that both they and the men will re-

flect, that we can have little hope of the blessings of Heaven, if we insult Almighty God by our impiety and folly" (*The Commandments Up-To-Date*, by Rufus C. Zartman, p. 76).

What actually occurs when a man takes the name of God in vain? He, the creature, is making light of the Creator. He who is the hourly beneficiary of God's care, who has a tongue because God gave it to him, who is surrounded by air because God placed it here and placed him in it, whose throat holds its vocal chords because God made and sustains it, uses all of these to make light of God. Whether he be a beardless youth who has picked up phrases from older men, or a man who is deep set in the habit of profanity, it is an utterly inexcusable and indefensible sin against God to profane His name.

His name is above every name. It is the summary of all progress in history. It is a tower and a defense. It is the watchword of liberty and truth. It is the charter of human rights. To take His name in vain is to take in vain every true and noble thing done by man through inspiration of God, since the beginning of time.

Society rests upon God, who is the substance and reality underneath and behind all things. To take His name in vain is to aim a blow at the foundation of social and domestic order. It is a blow at the state and at the family. It is a blow at justice and law and righteousness. It is a movement toward anarchy. The name of God stands for all that is highest and holiest and best. It stands for social order,—for the state, the family, the nation, the race; and he who takes this name in vain arrays himself against the strength, peace and security of the family and the brotherhood of man.

When we look into the natural world, see its beauty and fruitfulness, we cannot help asking: Whence came this beauty and fruitfulness? Who is it that sends down upon us the rain that waters the earth, and the snow that returns not till it has accomplished its purpose? Who causes the sun to shine upon us in its strength and gives us the ripened harvests and the fruitful seasons? Why is the earth so bountiful, the air so pleasant and refreshing, the skies over our heads so bright with the light of the sun by day and the shining of the stars by night?

There can be but one answer to these questions. God, who is the substance of all things, who is the reality behind shadows, the eternal who upholds and sustains the temporal. He it is who gives to the earth its beauty and fruitfulness. He sends His rain upon the just and the unjust, and causes His sun to shine on the evil and the good. It is His hand which has arrayed the lilies of the field with a glory greater than Solomon's. To take His name in vain is to aim a blow at the sweet ordinances of nature. It is to speak unkindly of the very stars which beam down upon us out of God's silent heaven.

Profanity is utterly and always inexcusable. It is a sin against reason. It doubtless originated in a desire to make one's self impressive to others. Professor Patrick of Iowa University links pro-

fanity with the growling of the lion, the hiss of the serpent and the arching of the back or enlarging of the fur of animals. They are trying to make themselves larger and more impressive and more awesome. So when men wish to impress others, they call to their aid the most awesome words of which they can think. First among those words will stand the name of God. No generation ever gets away from a half-conscious awe of Him.

So the profane word is used to give force to our expression; that is, it puts God to the cheap service of reinforcing us. It calls upon Him to aid us in the thing which is at its heart sinful in any case. We use it to express our anger, and so we make God partner with our wrath. It is evil to be angry with a fellow man, but is there any way to measure the depth of evil when, besides being angry ourselves, we drag God into the abyss with us and seek to involve Him in the anger of our souls?

Or, profanity may be used by some of us to show our independence. This is why some boys begin the practice. They want to horrify their gentler companions by coming quickly into manhood, and showing independence of devotion, or of reverence. When Peter stood by the open fire and the serving maid accused him of being a follower of Jesus, and he wanted to show most markedly that he did not belong to Him, he used an oath. After that there was no discussion. Every man who knew Jesus knew that this could not be one of His followers.

To many men profanity has become an unbroken habit. It is remarkable, however, that some men try to justify their swearing by saying that it is just a habit. Why can we not see that the habit involves a thousandfold more than the incidental sin? If a man has grown into the habit of using the name of God triflingly, there must lie back in his record many a use of it, and he must be marvelously calloused to the holiness of that divine name which he bandies about. Sometimes men look us squarely in the face and say, "We did use an oath, but we are so in the habit of it we did not think what we were doing." So in the habit of it! What a record such men must have! And how heavy must be the condemnation written already in their natures! They have warped and hardened their hearts, and in that state lies no excuse but only added condemnation.

The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain. Profanity is a sin against the Person of the Sovereign. It is high treason against the King of men. It is renouncing His authority, and the punishment is inevitable. It has a punishment in one's own moral nature. It robs one of the spirit of reverence. It makes one unready to acknowledge the rights and claims of God. One's own moral nature suffers from it.

The punishment lies also in the lowering of the tone of the whole race. There is great pathos about this assertion of ourselves against God. It makes us orphans in the universe. We have lost His Fatherhood. We have banished ourselves from His home.

The punishment lies also in the injury we do to children by our swearing. Perhaps you have seen children standing in the edge of a crowd, taking in with open mouth the vulgarity and profanity of men. Their natures were being hardened. They were being spoiled in the fineness of their lives. Profanity is the most coarsening of our sins. It takes away the edge of the fine life. Jesus has already pronounced His woe upon the man who makes one of the little ones to offend. He had better have been drowned in the depths of the sea before any child learned from him irreverence or the use of an oath.

The punishment for the sin of profanity lies finally in the certainty that if it be not repented of and the spirit which it indicates be not changed, there is such disharmony between the man and his God that he must be banished from the presence of God. Why should any man go into the presence of God, and be accepted and loved, when he has debased for himself and for others the entire thought of God, and has unfitted himself for any fellowship with Him?

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

| | |
|------------------------------------|-------------|
| Receipts | \$22,268.20 |
| Expenditures | 20,894.22 |
| Receipts Exceed Expenditures | \$ 1,373.98 |

This abbreviated financial statement is being made in order to have the Report printed without delay. Any information other than these figures will be given gladly on request and up-to-date statements printed at regular intervals.

New Television Work Progressing

"The response of sister congregations in support of the new television series is very encouraging," according to Frank Cawyer, one of the Highland Church of Christ elders who is now traveling in the interest of the television work.

The elders of the Highland congregation are asking the assistance of sister congregations in raising \$160,000 to be used in a new television series of the Herald of Truth program.

A half million dollars worth of free time for the showing of the new television series has been offered by a Chicago radio and television agency, which has handled the programing of the Herald of Truth since its inception in February 1952.

Cawyer has been in 12 states where he met with many elders and preachers concerning this new opportunity. He said, "While there is much needed to meet the goal of \$160,000, congregations from coast to coast are making special efforts to help the Highland Church of Christ in this work and also to take advantage of the \$500,000 worth of free time. Through this offer, 75 cents will make it possible for 1,000 people to view and hear a thirty-minute gospel message."

TV Schedule

NOTE: Unless otherwise specified, telecasts are on Sundays. Consult your daily paper for time of telecast if not listed below. In some cases stations may have completed series.

| CITY | STATION | TIME | CHANNEL |
|--|---------|-----------------|---------|
| Augusta, Georgia | WJBF | | 6 |
| Beaumont, Texas | KBMT | 9:30 p.m. | 31 |
| Bismarck, North Dakota | KBMB | 2:00 p.m. | 12 |
| Carlsbad, New Mexico | KAVE | | 11 |
| Chattanooga, Tennessee (Fourth consecutive run) | WDEF | | 12 |
| Dallas, Texas | KRLD | | 4 |
| El Paso, Texas | KROD | 10:00 a.m. | 4 |
| Fargo, North Dakota | KXJB | 11:30 a.m. | 4 |
| Fort Myers, Florida | WINK | | 11 |
| Hamilton, Bermuda | | | |
| Henderson, Kentucky (Area includes Evansville, Ind.) | WEHT | | 50 |
| Holdrege, Nebraska | KHOL | | 13 |
| Mayaguez, Puerto Rico | WORA | | 5 |
| Meridian, Mississippi | WTOK | | 11 |
| Minot, North Dakota | KCJB | | 13 |
| Monroe, Louisiana | KNOE | | 8 |
| Nashville, Tennessee | WSIX | 1:00 p.m. | 8 |
| Parkersburg, West Virginia | WTAP | | 15 |
| Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania | WENS | | 16 |
| Richmond, Virginia | WTVR | 12:30 p.m. | 6 |
| Saginaw, Michigan | WKNX | | 57 |
| Shreveport, Louisiana | KSLA | 12:15 p.m. | 12 |
| Stockton, California | KOVR | 9:30-10:00 p.m. | 13 |
| Tulare, California | KVVG | 3:00 p.m. | 27 |
| York, Pennsylvania | WNOW | 6:00 p.m. | 49 |

"Question of the Week"

The "Question of the Week" heard at the beginning of the Herald of Truth radio program has become an outstanding feature since it was added to the program in January of this year. The question is sent in by a radio listener, read by Phil Kendrick, the announcer, and is answered by the speaker of the day.

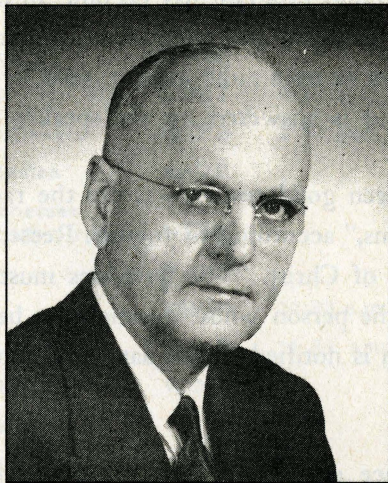
"There has been good responses from the radio audience in sending in questions," according to John F. Reese, an elder at the Highland Church of Christ. "The questions must be of a scriptural nature and the person whose question has been selected for a coming program is notified of the date it will be heard on the program."

Correspondence concerning the "Question of the Week" should be addressed to the Highland Church of Christ, Box 1858, Abilene, Texas.

COMING SERMONS BY JAMES WILLEFORD

| | |
|---------|--------------------------------------|
| July 1 | <i>The Third Commandment, No. 2</i> |
| July 8 | <i>The Third Commandment, No. 3</i> |
| July 15 | <i>The Fourth Commandment, No. 1</i> |
| July 22 | <i>The Fourth Commandment, No. 2</i> |
| July 29 | <i>The Fourth Commandment, No. 3</i> |

Meet E. R. Harper



THE FIRST guest speaker on the Herald of Truth radio program was E. R. Harper, who has been minister at the Highland Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas, since 1945. He became a regular speaker, along with James D. Willeford, on the radio program in 1955.

He has preached for more than thirty years, which includes his work for seven years in Jackson, Tennessee, twelve years with the Sixth and Izard congregation in Little Rock, Arkansas, and eleven years at the Highland congregation in Abilene.

Mr. and Mrs. Harper have three grown daughters and one son.

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